

An Essay on
Acute and Chronic Rheumatism

Respectfully Submitted

To the Faculty of the
Homoeopathic Medical College
of Pennsylvania

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One thousand eight hundred and Fifty-two.

by
John A. Stock,
of Pennsylvania

Although in a strict sense the affections embraced in the title of this essay, may not be regarded as of a serious character yet owing to the frequency with which they are met in practice, demand the closest attention on the part of the physician. It is as much the province of the practitioner of medicine to attend to what might be styled the minor class of diseases, as those apparently of a more formidable nature. In a word, it is his duty to direct his efforts for the alleviation of suffering, in every form. And in the long list of diseases to which the human family are subject, none can be found which have entailed more widespread suffering than Rheumatic Affections. Happily, for the afflicted that Homoeopathy

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has interposed her genial offices, for it is here, in a remarkable degree, that her wonderful influence for good, can be established. The sufferer need no longer subject himself to the severe appliances of Allopathy for relief. This desired end can more readily and more certainly be attained under the mild and rational practice as first established by the immortal Hahnemann.

The usual exciting causes of Rheumatism, are dampness, chills, or sudden arrest of perspiration. The predisposing causes may be as follows: Too warm regimen, which excites the skin to increased sensibility - want of proper exercise - general and local weakness. The disease, however, may be developed without any predisposition.

It is certain that no complaint is more readily generated.

Rheumatism is arranged in two classes, viz: Acute and chronic. The former is preceded by chills, alternating with heat, thirst, and accelerated pulse. These are followed with pains in the larger joints, frequently changing their situation. The affected parts are very sensitive, attended with swelling and redness. The latter may be known by the pain in the parts being unaccompanied with fever, less swelling and not frequently associated with a sensation of stiffness and numbness.

An adequate acquaintance with the Homoeopathic Materia Medica will enable the physician to combat this

disease with but little difficulty, by a proper application of that knowledge. Among the medicines successfully employed in Rheumatism, may be named the following: Aconite, Belladonna, Bryonia, Mercurius, Rhus Tox. Nux Vomica, Colchicum, China, Rhododendron, Sulphur, Chamomilla, Arnica, Meserium, Pulsatilla, Anacardium. The indications for these remedies are briefly noted:

Aconite.— This medicine is very frequently called for at the onset of the disease. The leading symptoms are, high fever, dry heat, thirst, shooting or tearing pains, worse at night, pains aggravated on touch or motion.

Belladonna.— This remedy is indicated when the pains are of a shooting

character, accompanied with a sensation of burning, chiefly in the joints, worse on movement, swollen condition of the parts, with redness and shining appearance - determination of blood to the head when fever is present, with throbbing of the vessels of that part, and redness of the face, heat of the skin, thirst and sleeplessness.

Bryonia is an important agent in many conditions of this disease. Its leading symptoms are: severe shooting pains, much increased by motion of the parts affected, or by cold draughts of air, swelling of the joints of either extremities, gastric derangements and headache - the pains seem more located in the muscles and about the joints, than in the

bones. Persecution of temper and great irascibility also are strong indications for this medicine.

Mercurius is suited to cases in which the pains are increased by warmth of bed and exposure to damp or cold air, worse towards morning. It is particularly useful when the pains seem situated in the bones or joints with profuse perspiration without diminution of suffering.

Plus Toxicodendron. - This is a most efficient remedy and cures a great variety of symptoms. It is especially applicable when the patient complains of a feeling of dulness, torpor, and crawling, with a sense of paralytic weakness or trembling

of the extremities in the effort to move them; sensation of bruising or laceration as if the flesh were torn from the bones - pains worse during rest and relieved by motion - inflammation or swelling in the joints, with stiffness - suffering much aggravated in damp or cold weather.

Nux Vomica may be administered when there are present sensations of numbness, paralysis or tightness in the parts, with cramps and palpitation of the muscles - The pains are of a dragging description, mainly confined to the joints, back, chest and loins, aggravated by cold. This medicine is further indicated when gastric difficulties and constipation are complained of.

Colchicum is indicated when there is slight fever during cold or damp weather and gastric irregularities. It is also a remedy of much importance in Rheumatic fever, with general dry heat, palpitation of the heart, thirst and fugitive sweats - worse in the afternoon. The pains of a tearing, shooting character, greatly aggravated at night, subsiding towards morning and then suddenly fixing upon some other part of the body, which in turn becomes painful and inflamed, while the parts previously affected lose their former redness, but remain in a swollen condition for several hours.

China. - This remedy may be given with much benefit at the commencement of an attack of

Rheumatic fever, presenting the following symptoms: Nocturnal, aching, pressive pains in the head, with general restlessness and disturbed sleep, an internal more than external feeling of chilliness - with icy coldness of hands and feet. (partial heat supervening gradually) severe headache, dragging, tearing pains in the back, thighs and knees, with weakness in the parts - the pains are worse on contact. Gastric or bilious derangements may accompany these symptoms.

Rhododendron - May be beneficially administered in Rheumatic fever, where the chilliness alternates with heat, also pressive headache from within outwards, with sensation of

drawing in the limbs, - the pains seem chiefly to be fixed in the periosteum, and are aggravated by rest and changeable weather.

Sulphur. This important medicament has a wide range in affections of this character. Some of the symptoms are: Drawing, tearing, pricking pains in the extremities and joints, with swelling of the latter, - pains relieved by external warmth, and worse from cold - also aggravated by rest and relieved on movement.

Chamomilla. We may employ this remedy with advantage when there are dragging or tearing pains, with sensations of numbness or paralysis in the affected parts, with feeble

symptoms - desire to remain in a recumbent posture - perspiration - pains worse at night, relieved from frequent changing of position.

Arnica is indicated when the patient complains of a bruised sensation in the extremities, with debility, redness and swelling - worse on the slightest movement, yet with a constant desire to change the position of the limbs.

Meserium - Is applicable in cases of Rheumatic fever where the sufferer has been subjected to large doses of Mercury, the pains being of a drawing, tensile character, and located in the long bones.

Pulsatilla would be applicable where the pains are of a tingling

nature, and move quickly from one joint to another, and are relieved by motion. This remedy is best suited to persons of mild temperament.

Arsenicum is best adapted where the pains are of a burning, tearing, lancinating character, with much heat of the skin, excessive thirst, and small accelerated pulse, with swelling of the extremities - the pain being relieved on perspiration. It is an invaluable remedy in Rheumatic Metastasis to internal organs.

The remedies enumerated above will cover most cases of Rheumatic affections which the practitioner may encounter. Still a great number of other medicines are frequently employed with the

most happy effects. Among them may
be noted, Calcareo, Ignatia, Causticum,
Cocculus, Iperosulphuris, Colocynthis, Sepia,
Lachesis, Phosphorus, Carbo vegetabilis, &c.

With so formidable an array of
remedial agents before him, and
with a proper knowledge of their
specific virtues, the Homoeopathic
Physician should be at no loss how
to direct his efforts for the relief of
the sufferer from rheumatic
complaints.